

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4655

UNCLAS CANBERRA 8034

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: AS, PINT

SUBJECT: POLITICAL FAVORITISM CHARGES RAISED AGAINST
WHITLAM GOVERNMENT

1. SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM'S APPOINTMENT OF PETER WILENSKI AS PERMANENT HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND IMMIGRATION PROVOKED HEATED CONTROVERSY AND NEGATIVE PRESS AND EDITORIAL COMMENT. IT RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT A NUMBER OF ALP APPOINTMENTS TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND IT PROVIDES OPPOSITION WITH FURTHER AMMUNITION WITH WHICH TO ATTACK THE WHITLAM GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM ANNOUNCED ON 10 DEC 74 THAT HIS FORMER PRIVATE SECRETARY PETER WILENSKI, WILL BECOME PERMANENT HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND IMMIGRATION. THE ANNOUNCEMENT PROVOKED HEATED CRITICISM FROM OPPOSITION SPOKESMEN AS WELL AS NEGATIVE PRESS AND EDITORIAL COMMENT. THE LEAD SENTENCE IN THE MELBOURNE AGE'S 11 DEC 74 EDITORIAL SUMS UP THE PRESS REACTION - "THE APPOINTMENT OF DR. PETER WILENSKI AS PERMANENT HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND IMMIGRATION IS A CASE OF DEPLORABLE ETHICS, CYNICAL POLITICS AND AN OUTRAGEOUS SENSE OF HISTORY." MOST CRITICS OF THE APPOINTMENT AGREE THAT DR. WILENSKI IS A BRILLIANT AND WELL QUALIFIED INDIVIDUAL,
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BUT OPPOSE THE IDEA OF APPOINTING A MAN WHO IS CLOSELY

IDENTIFIED WITH THE ALP TO A SENIOR POSITION IN WHAT IS SUPPOSED TO BE AN IMPARTIAL PUBLIC SERVICE.

3. DEPUTY OPPOSITION LEADER LYNCH STRONGLY ATTACKED THE APPOINTMENT AND LINKED IT TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE APPOINTMENTS OF A NUMBER OF OTHER ALP FIGURES. HE SPECIFICALLY CRITICIZED THE APPOINTMENTS OF JOHN MENADUE, ANOTHER ONE OF PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM'S FORMER PRIVATE SECRETARIES; AS SECRETARY DESIGNATE OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT; AND THAT OF MR. AL GRASSBY, A FORMER IMMIGRATION MINISTER WHO LOST HIS SEAT IN THE LAST FEDERAL ELECTION, AS ADVISOR ON COMMUNITY RELATIONS. LYNCH ALSO LISTED 15 OTHER ALP POLITICIANS AND SUPPORTERS, INCLUDING MRS. WHITLAM, WHO HAD BEEN APPOINTED TO GOVERNMENT POSITIONS IN THE LAST TWO YEARS. LYNCH SAID "THE INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE WAS BEING ERODED BY A POLICY OF PATRONAGE, NEPOTISM, AND FAVORITISM".

4. THE WILENSKI APPOINTMENT COMING THE MIDST OF A SPIRITED SENATE DEBATE ABOUT THE MOROSI AFFAIR CREATES MORE CONTROVERSY OVER THE WHITLAM GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF PUBLIC SERVICE APPOINTMENTS.
SIMPSON

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